

R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 011 374

AL 000 194

USE OF PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION IN A FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSE
- A FEASIBILITY STUDY.

BY- TAYLOR, ELEANOR C. DIAMOND, ROBERT M.
MIAMI UNIV., CORAL GABLES, FLA., UNIVERSITY COLL.

REPORT NUMBER R-28

PUB DATE MAY 66

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.09 HC-\$0.72 18P.

DESCRIPTORS- PROGRAMED MATERIALS, *ENGLISH CURRICULUM,
*PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS, COMPOSITION SKILLS (LITERARY),
COLLEGE CURRICULUM, STUDENT ATTITUDES, CORAL GABLES

THIS PROJECT WAS DESIGNED TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND FEASIBILITY OF USING PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION TO CORRECT GRAMMATICAL AND MECHANICAL WRITING ERRORS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN A FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSE. THE TEST GROUP INCLUDED STUDENTS WHO HAD SCORED LESS THAN 64 IN THE COOPERATIVE ENGLISH TEST. EIGHTEEN PROGRAMS WERE EVALUATED BY THE FACULTY AND FIVE WERE SELECTED FOR USE IN THE PILOT PROGRAM--"ENGLISH 3200," "ENGLISH 2600," "PROPER PUNCTUATION," "EFFECTIVE WRITING," AND THE "ENGLISH REVIEW MANUAL." AFTER ONE SEMESTER OF UTILIZATION, AND AS A RESULT OF STUDENT ATTITUDE STUDIES AND FURTHER EVALUATION, "ENGLISH 2600" AND THE "ENGLISH REVIEW MANUAL" WERE EXCLUDED. THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS WERE REACHED--(1) CERTAIN BASIC PROBLEMS INVOLVING GRAMMATICAL AND MECHANICAL WRITING ERRORS, CAN, IF THE STUDENT IS MOTIVATED, BE CORRECTED THROUGH PROGRAMED SEQUENCES, (2) BY UTILIZING MULTIPLE COPIES OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL PROGRAMS, IT IS POSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS WITH MINIMUM EXPENDITURES, AND (3) STUDENTS HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION. (RS)

USE OF PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION IN A FRESHMAN
COMPOSITION COURSE - A FEASIBILITY STUDY

Eleanor C. Taylor
Robert M. Diamond

May 1966

Report No. 28

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE
PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION
POSITION OR POLICY.

ED011374

OFFICE FOR THE STUDY OF INSTRUCTION

University College
University of Miami
Coral Gables, Florida

Directors:
Dr. Robert M. Diamond, Instructional
Resources
Dr. John Walker Powell, Curriculum Study
Dr. John C. Woodward, Evaluation

This study was conducted under a grant from The Fund for the
Advancement of Education.

AL 000 194

Table of Contents

Background	1
Method of Procedure	3
Selection of Programs	3
Utilization	7
Conclusions	11
Appendix	

USE OF PROGRAMED INSTRUCTION IN A FRESHMAN
COMPOSITION COURSE - A FEASIBILITY STUDY

Eleanor C. Taylor
Robert M. Diamond

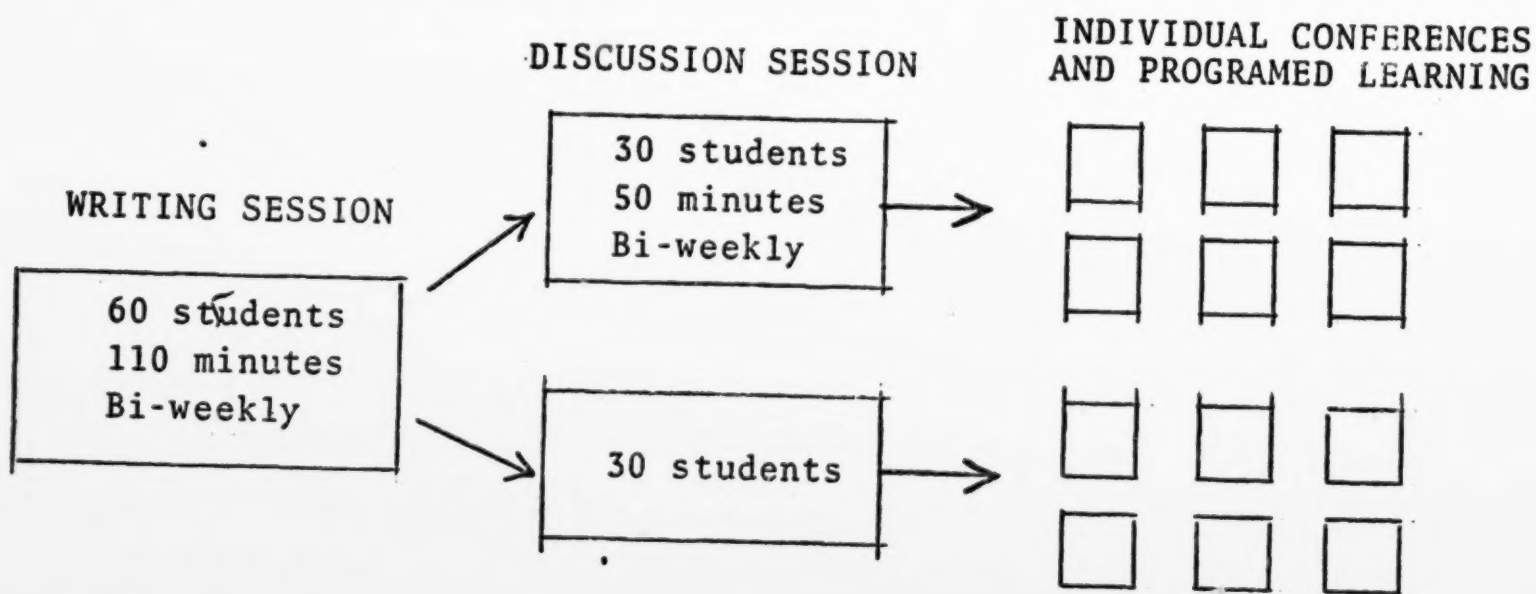
Background

One of three courses required of all freshman students at the University of Miami is Humanities 101-102 which consists of a broad survey of Western literature, art, music and philosophy, as well as requirements in composition.

As part of the orientation program the University requires that all entering freshmen take the Cooperative English Test. Students who score 64 and above on the test are assigned to Humanities seminars which include instruction and experience in composition as part of the general curriculum requirements. Those who score below 64 (approximately 75% of the total) must also enroll in the Writing Program which requires additional sessions of concentrated composition instruction and writing experience. This program consists of semi-weekly large group sessions which alternate with medium-group sessions plus individual conferences as required (see Illustration I).

During the 1965 fall semester, approximately 1,350 students scored below the 64 cut-off mark and were enrolled in the Writing Program. It should be noted that this program is rather unique in that it is staffed by a highly specialized faculty who are trained in composition skills and, for the most part, have no other teaching assignment.

ILLUSTRATION I
INSTRUCTIONAL PATTERN
University of Miami Humanities Writing Program



In the program all of the students' writing is done during the large-group session. Their work is entered in a special theme book which is kept by the instructor throughout the entire semester. Medium-group sessions are devoted to instruction in writing skills and utilize a variety of educational media including tape-slide lecture presentations and overhead transparencies.

Prior to this experiment, the small-group sessions and individual conferences between student and teacher were devoted to detailed discussion of specific writing errors. Instructors spent long hours in routine and repetitious drill in an attempt to correct simple grammatical and mechanical errors and were, therefore, deprived of time for advisement in more creative areas of composition skills.

During each semester four major themes are required of Writing Program students. From experience it was found that the major student

writing weaknesses could be classified into several categories: rhetorical, organization, grammatical and mechanical. While rhetorical and organizational problems require individual discussion between teacher and student for clarification, grammatical and mechanical errors appeared to be amenable to the technique of programmed instruction. It was therefore decided to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of using short programmed sequences to correct these basic writing problems. If this technique could be used successfully, instructors would be free to devote more time to the rhetorical and organizational problems which require their individual attention for correction.

Method of Procedure

Selection of Programs

Before selection of program sequences could begin it was necessary to identify the grammatical and mechanical errors consistently committed by students in their written work. Ten¹ categories were identified by the instructional staff:

1. The Run-on Sentence (comma splice):

Correcting student failure to supply adequate stop punctuation between independent clauses, especially when they are connected by conjunctive adverbs (e.g. however, moreover).

2. The Sentence Fragment:

Leading students to recognize independent sentence

¹The number was increased to eighteen during the utilization phase of the study.

structures and discriminate between independent and dependent clauses and between finite and non-finite verb forms.

3. Vague (indefinite) Reference of Pronouns:

Correcting student habit of using pronouns (e.g. this, that, which) the referents of which are either non-existent or ambiguous.

4. Pronoun Agreement:

Correcting failure of students to make pronouns agree in person, number or gender with their noun antecedents.

5. Subject-Verb Agreement:

Impressing upon the student the grammatical necessity of concordance between the subject of the sentence and its related verb.

6. The Misplaced Modifier:

Focusing student attention on the rules of modification which demand that modifiers occupy a prescribed position in the sentence.

7. Parallel Structuring:

Correcting student tendency to shift syntactical commitments, including switches in verb form, point of view (I to you) and structure of series (nouns to adjectives, phrases to clauses).

8. Colon, Semicolon, Dash.

9. Comma.

10. Quotation Marks, Italics, Parenthesis.

Rather than develop new programmed sequences, a decision was made to utilize, if possible, materials that were already available commercially. Since only segments of the programmed texts were to be used, it was necessary to identify the specific frames within a program dealing with a particular problem area. It was anticipated that no more than six or seven sequences would be used within any one program. With the assistance of the Office for the Study of Instruction all available commercial programs that included remedial work in the above areas were secured and reviewed by members of the Writing Program faculty. A total of 18 programs were evaluated and eliminations made on the basis of poor content, incorrect level of ability and lack of an indexing system to help locate instructional frames dealing with specific problem areas.

From the 18, the following five programs--all available in book form¹--were selected for use in the pilot study:

English 3200 (Joseph C. Blumenthal, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.)

English 2600 (Joseph C. Blumenthal, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.)

Proper Punctuation (Tutor Text, Kellogg Smith and Leighton G. Steele, Doubleday & Company, Inc.)

Effective Writing (Tutor Text, Kellogg Smith and Jane Stapleford, Doubleday & Company, Inc.)

The English Review Manual (James A. Gowen, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Test Edition)

The particular sequences dealing with each of the specific problem areas were identified within each of the selected programmed texts. (See Appendix A for frames or pages used for each subject area.)

¹Proper Punctuation was also available as a program in the Auto-Tutor teaching machine. The use of the machine, though effective and enjoyed by the students, was dropped for administrative reasons.

During the preliminary evaluation in the spring of 1965, a minimum of 20 students were sent through each sequence in each program and an attitude questionnaire administered. These students were selected because of writing deficiencies in the specific area and were assigned to a particular program at random. In addition to the program, students were given a short booklet--also programmed--that described the programming format and listed the assignment. A different booklet was written for each program book used as they differed markedly in basic format.

As a result of student attitude studies and additional faculty evaluation, English 2600 and The English Review Manual were not retained in the program after the first semester. When both branching and linear programs were available in the same area, the branching format received a more favorable reaction by the students.

At the conclusion of the first semester of field testing, members of the writing faculty requested that additional areas of programmed instruction be made available for remedial work. Eight more categories were added: Verbs, Capitals, Apostrophes, Shifts, Repetition and Redundancy, and three areas of Spelling. For the spelling assignments an additional program text was required and Spelling Improvement (Patricia M. Fergus, McGraw-Hill Book Company) was selected by the faculty evaluators.

As use of the materials increased, the programmed texts were transferred to the reference shelves of the main University library and a standardized assignment procedure was instituted. Upon completion of a theme, the students' work was graded by the instructor who noted errors made in the various categories. When the

same grammatical or mechanical writing error occurred three times or more in a single theme, a student was given a referral card (see Illustration II) noting the area that needed remedial work.

Illustration II
Assignment Card

Student's Name _____	Instructor _____
☐ 1. Run-on Sentence	☐ 9. Subj.-Verb Agree.
☐ 2. Sentence Fragment	☐ 10. Parallel Structure
☐ 3. Pronoun Agreement	☐ 11. Shift
☐ 4. Misplaced Modifier	☐ 12. Repetition & Redundancy
☐ 5. Verbs	☐ 13. Comma
☐ 6. Capitals	☐ 14. Quotation marks, Italics, etc.
☐ 7. Apostrophe	☐ 15. Colon, Semi-colon, Dash
☐ 8. Pronoun Reference	☐ 16. Spelling I (Homonyms & Confused Words)
	☐ 17. Spelling II (Demons)
	☐ 18. Spelling III (Suffix)

TAKE THIS CARD TO RESERVE READING DESK, RICHTER LIBRARY.

For accurate clerical tabulation a student that was assigned to more than one area was given a separate referral card for each area. Students were required to present the card to the librarian at the reserve desk in the library and secure the appropriate instruction booklet and programed text. Referral cards of students were returned to their instructor by the librarian at the end of each week. During the fall semester of 1965 utilization figures were recorded and a student attitude questionnaire again administered.

Utilization

With 1,352 students enrolled in the Writing Program during the fall semester there were 691 assignments to the programed sequences. Approximately 10% of all students were given assignments at least

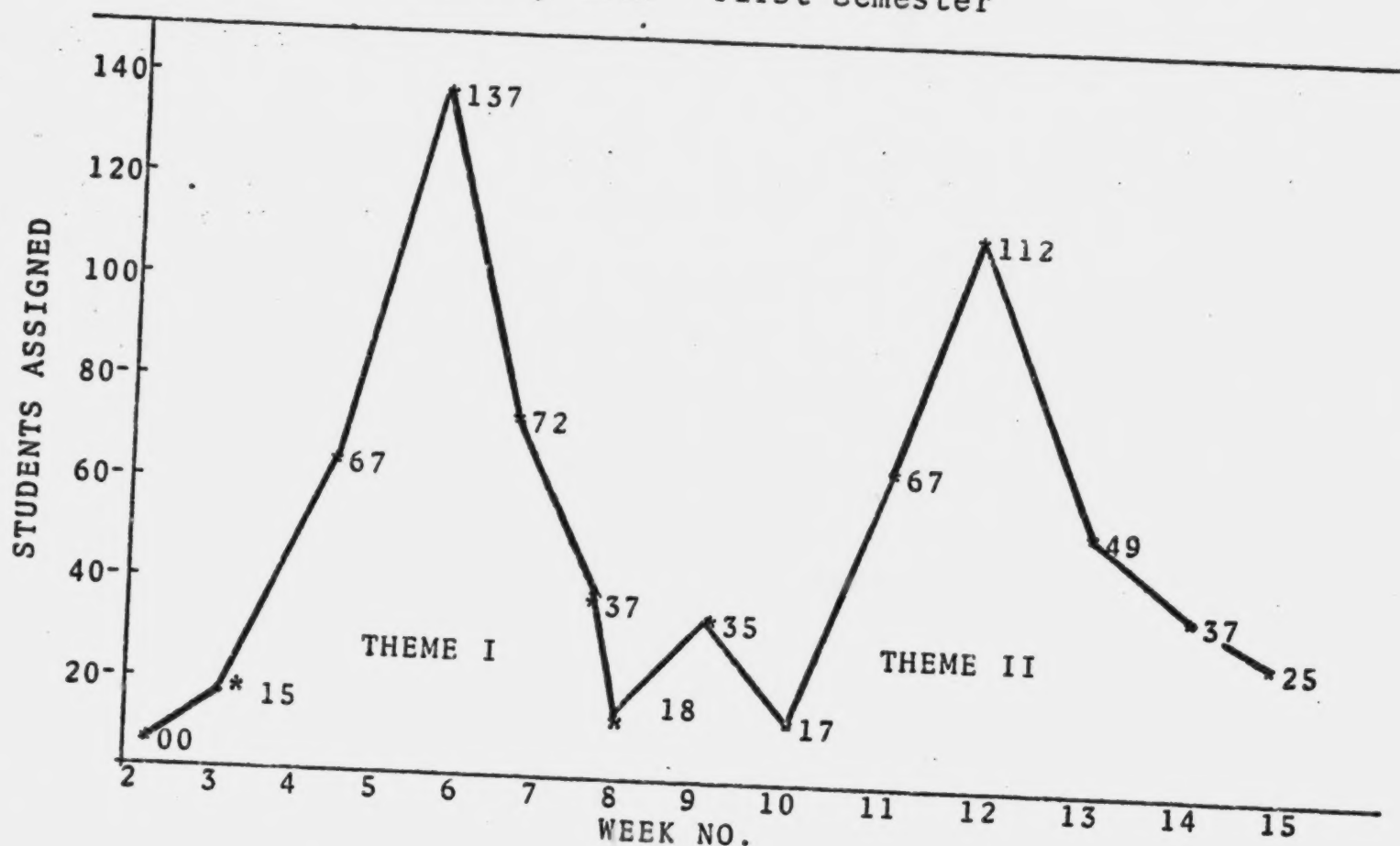
once during the semester with 45% of these being given more than one assignment. A list of assignments by area is found in Table I.

TABLE I
Assignment by Problem Area

<u>89</u> Run-on Sentence	<u>19</u> Parallel Structure
<u>64</u> Sentence Fragment	<u>19</u> Shift
<u>7</u> Pronoun Agreement	<u>39</u> Repetition and Redundancy
<u>34</u> Misplaced Modifier	<u>108</u> Comma
<u>32</u> Verbs	<u>2</u> Quotation marks, Italics, etc.
<u>13</u> Capitals	<u>15</u> Colon, Semi-colon, Dash
<u>43</u> Apostrophe	<u>53</u> Spelling I (homonyms & confused words)
<u>68</u> Pronoun Reference	<u>31</u> Spelling II (demons)
<u>33</u> Subj.-Verb Agreement	<u>22</u> Spelling III (suffix)

As would be anticipated, maximum utilization occurred during the weeks following the grading of the two major themes--the fifth and twelfth weeks (see Table II).

Table II
Use by Week - First Semester



An attitude questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 275 students (see Table III).

Student reactions to the approach were positive: 76% said that they went carefully through the programmed lessons, 95% found the programs clear and 77% found the sequences helpful. The average time spent on a sequence was about 20 minutes. It should be noted that there were no differences in attitudes between students who received only one assignment and those who were sent several times.

When assignments by individual faculty members were tabulated, a great variance in use was found between instructors. One instructor averaged over two assignments per student while two members of the faculty averaged less than one assignment per ten students (see Table IV).

Table III - Student Questionnaire

No. of sequences assigned:	1		2		3		4 or more		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I FOUND THIS EXPERIENCE: extremely helpful some help little help a waste of time no answer	27 87 23 14 0	18 58 15 9 -	9 41 4 7 0	15 67 7 11 -	6 28 5 2 0	15 68 12 5 -	3 11 2 6 0	14 50 9 27 -	45 167 3 29 0	16 61 12 10 -
I FOUND THIS EXPERIENCE: interesting of some interest of little interest extremely boring no answer	52 65 16 18 0	34 43 11 12 -	15 26 13 6 1	24 43 21 10 2	10 19 8 4 0	24 46 20 10 -	6 8 2 6 0	27 36 9 27 -	83 118 39 34 1	30 43 14 12 1
The sequence(s) required: 5-10 minutes 10-20 minutes over 20 minutes no answer	15 61 73 2	10 40 49 1	3 31 26 1	5 51 43 2	2 25 14 0	5 61 34 -	2 9 10 1	9 41 45 5	22 126 123 4	8 46 45 1
I WENT CAREFULLY I DID NOT GO CAREFULLY: no answer	120 27 4	79 18 2	42 17 2	68 28 3	29 12 0	70 29 -	18 3 1	82 14 5	209 59 7	76 21 2
I FOUND THE INSTRU- TIONAL BOOKLET: extremely clear fairly clear confusing no answer	87 54 10 0	58 36 07 -	33 25 3 0	54 42 5 -	23 17 1 0	56 41 2 -	12 10 0 0	55 45 - -	155 106 14 0	56 39 5 -
Total n	131		61		41		22		275	
Total %	55		22		15		8		100	

Table IV
Faculty Use Ratio

() number of students in classes		
A (56)	.357	
B (57)	.526	
C (57)	.105	
D (84)	.178	
E (106)	.254	
F (108)		2.222
G (112)	.098	
H (118)	.220	
I (196)	.485	
J (226)	.685	
K (232)	.091	
		.1 .2 .3 .4 .5 .6 .7 .8 .9 1.0 1.1 1.2 1.3
		RATIO= $\frac{\text{students sent}}{\text{students in classes}}$

Conclusions

1. Certain basic writing problems involving grammatical and mechanical errors generally can be corrected by programmed instruction.
2. Students have a positive attitude toward short remedial programmed sequences when they are assigned to correct specific and identified errors.
3. When short remedial program sequences are made easily available to composition teachers, they will direct their students to use them.

4. By utilizing multiple copies of existing commercial programs, it is possible to implement this instructional technique for large numbers of students with minimum expense. (A maximum of ten copies of each of four programs was required for 1,350 students.)

5. There is presently no single programmed text that meets all of the remedial requirements of a writing course of this type.

6. The major grammatical and mechanical writing problems of college freshmen at the University of Miami occur in the use of the comma, pronoun reference and sentence fragments.

7. At the university level students prefer programs written in branching rather than linear format.

This approach has proved to be easy to implement and simple to use and it has resulted in a more efficient and effective use of faculty time within the Writing Program.

APPENDIX A

Program Sequences by Subject Area

Subject Area	Programed Text	Assignment
1. Run-on Sentence	English 3200	Frame 1384 to 1459
2. Sentence Fragment	English 3200	Frame 1275 to 1382
3. Pronoun Agreement	English 3200	Frame 2620 to 2645
4. Misplaced Modifier	English 3200	Frame 1482 to 1520
5. Verbs	English 3200	Frame 2177 to 2318
6. Capitals	English 3200	Frame 3108 to 3178
7. Apostrophe	English 3200	Frame 3030 to 3106
8. Pronoun Reference	Effective Writing	Pages 70 to 134
9. Subj.-Verb Agreement	Effective Writing	Pages 1 to 69
10. Parallel Structure	Effective Writing	Pages 187 to 236
11. Shift	Effective Writing	Pages 237 to 306
12. Repetition & Redundancy	Effective Writing	Pages 428 to 467
13. Comma	Proper Punctuation	Pages 118 to 165
14. Quotation marks, Italics, etc.	Proper Punctuation	Pages 167 to 195
15. Colon, Semi-colon, Dash	Proper Punctuation	Pages 67 to 103
16. Spelling I (Homonyms & Confused Words)	Spelling Improvement	Pages 135 to 167
17. Spelling II (Demons)	Spelling Improvement	Pages 171 to 237
18. Spelling III (Suffix)	Spelling Improvement	Pages 241 to 313